

### 3.13 VISUAL RESOURCES

Information contained in this section is summarized from the *SR-22/West Orange County Connection Visual Impact Assessment* and the *Reduced Build Alternative Visual Impact Assessment Addendum* (December 2000), Section 3.13 of the August 2001 DEIR/EIS and the *Visual Impact Assessment, Reduced Build Alternative, (Revised) Addendum* (April 2002).

#### 3.13.1 Regional Setting

The SR-22/West Orange County Connection (SR-22/WOCC) is located in a portion of Southern California that is generally flat or gently sloping, and almost entirely urbanized. Most of the area is suburban with substantial amounts of landscaping. The study area is crossed by numerous waterways comprised of concrete-lined flood control channels.

Development in most of the study area includes one- to two-story residential houses, commercial office buildings and larger industrial facilities, and shopping malls separated by large parking lots or open areas. the U.S. Naval Weapons Station is near the northwestern portion of the study area, and has large areas with little development.

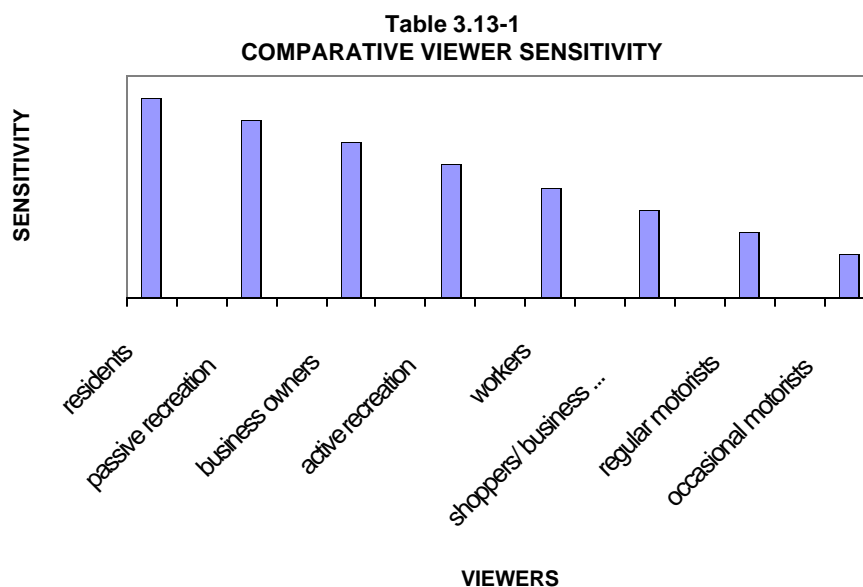
Views within the study area are generally confined to the local area due to development. In some areas, regional landmarks such as the San Gabriel Mountains and the San Bernardino Mountains are visible.

#### 3.13.2 Viewshed

The viewshed of a project area includes the landform, vegetation, water and color within the project area. The study area for the SR-22/WOCC viewshed extends eastward from the vicinity of I-605 and Katella Avenue and I-605/I-405 interchange to the SR-22/SR-55 interchange.

#### 3.13.3 Viewer Groups

Table 3.13-1, Comparative Viewer Sensitivity, provides a graphic representation of the comparative sensitivity of the various types of viewers in the SR-22/WOCC viewshed.



The largest percentage of viewers in the viewshed is made up of the motorists on the freeway system. Most of these viewers have a moderate to low sensitivity to the visual environment due to their concentration on driving and their focus on their destination. The next most common type of viewer in the viewshed is the local resident/worker located in areas adjacent to the freeway network. This viewer is typically much more sensitive to the surrounding visual environment than the typical motorist.

Other smaller groups of viewers such as recreational viewers also occur in the viewshed. Recreational viewers are those using the parks and other recreational facilities along the corridor. Their sensitivity to the visual environment tends to be high when engaged in passive activities and moderate when concentrating on more engaging activities.

#### 3.13.4 Methodology

The first step is to analyze the existing regional landscape. A brief analysis establishes a frame of reference for comparing the visual effects of the proposed project. This is evaluated using the physical quality factors of landform, vegetation, water and color. Then, analyze the study area that would be affected by the proposed project. This area is called a viewshed and is a two-way view: the areas that can be seen from the project area and the areas that can be seen looking into the project area. The viewshed is then divided into landscape units for analysis. There are four units identified along the SR-22 corridor: the Suburban Landscape Unit, the Urban Landscape Unit, the Open Landscape Unit and the Motorist Landscape Unit (described below). Once the viewshed, landscape units and key viewpoints have been identified, it is possible to rate the visual quality of both the existing conditions and the proposed conditions. There are four factors used to evaluate the landscape units. *View opportunities* determine the location of the viewer in relation to the proposed project. *Physical quality factors* are the existing physical features of the area. *Perceptual quality factors* evaluate the existing landscape unit based on vividness, intactness and unity. *Sensitivity to change factors* evaluate the landscape unit with the proposed project, and how a change to the existing environment will affect the viewers.

##### A. SUBURBAN LANDSCAPE UNIT

This landscape unit makes up approximately 29 percent of the SR-22/WOCC viewshed. This unit consists of the residential areas that surround the proposed SR-22/WOCC. The view is either directly adjacent to the freeway or within the vicinity of the proposed project. The Key Viewpoints for the Suburban Landscape Unit consist of the residential areas near or within the vicinity of the proposed freeway widening. Physical Quality Factors are of moderate quality. Perceptual Quality of the existing condition is moderate to high quality. However, after project completion, vividness, intactness and unity drop to low to moderate quality the closer the homes are to the project site. Viewer sensitivity to change is high due to the change in view at certain areas.

Suburban Key Viewpoint

Figure 3.13-1



**B. URBAN LANDSCAPE UNIT**

This landscape unit makes up approximately 30 percent of the SR-22/WOCC viewshed. It is characterized by commercial areas and is dominated by hard surfaces, including the buildings themselves and the surrounding paved areas. Many of the commercial areas are located adjacent to the freeway. Views within the Urban Landscape Unit can be extensive, especially from the upper floors of tall buildings. Physical Quality Factors are of Moderate Quality. Perceptual Quality of existing conditions is of moderate quality. Because many of the commercial areas consist of expanses of paving and large building structures, the Perceptual Quality and Viewer Sensitivity to Change remain the same moderate quality after construction.

**Urban Key Viewpoint****Figure 3.13-2**



**C. OPEN LANDSCAPE UNIT**

This landscape unit makes up approximately 41 percent of the SR-22/WOCC viewshed and is characterized by large areas with limited amounts of hardscape or buildings. Views widen substantially in the Open Landscape Unit due to the lack of intervening structures.

The key viewpoint is typical of the view from open space areas that are accessible to the public. At the Open Key Viewpoint, the freeway is fully visible, cutting across the view and providing a background for the view. Physical Quality Factors are of moderate quality. Perceptual Quality of the existing condition is moderate to high. The Viewer Sensitivity to Change is moderate because the view already has encroaching elements on it.

**Open Key Viewpoint****Figure 3.13-3**

## D. VIEW FROM THE FREEWAY (MOTORIST LANDSCAPE UNIT)

The view from the freeway goes through all the landscape units, changing according to viewer activity and speed. Details are lost in such a view, and only the basic elements of the landscape are noticeable. The freeway itself is visually dominant in this view, with freeway landscaping framing the edges. Physical Quality Factor is moderate. Perceptual Quality Factors of the existing condition are moderate. However, after project construction, the view is of low to moderate quality. Many of the existing trees will be removed and soundwalls will take their place. Therefore, Viewer Sensitivity to Change is moderate to high.

View From the Freeway

Figure 3.13-4



## 3.13.5 Existing Visual Quality at Important Visual Resources

Important visual resources include areas where the visual environment is particularly important to the land use. In the SR-22/WOCC study area, these include parks, recreational areas, trails, historic properties and other visual resources identified in local policy documents (see Table 3.13-2, Important Visual Resources).

**Table 3.13-2  
IMPORTANT VISUAL RESOURCES**

<b>Important Visual Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Parks</b>	
<b>Parks adjacent or near the proposed project</b>	Existing visual quality is high to moderate. The freeway is not visible from many of the parks due to existing noise barriers.
<b>Trails</b>	
<b>Trails adjacent or near the proposed project</b>	Existing visual quality is moderate to low. The freeway is visible from many of the trails
<b>Recreational Facilities</b>	
<b>Schools, and recreational facilities adjacent or near the proposed project</b>	Existing visual quality is moderate to high. In many of the areas, the freeway is visible but through partially screened vegetation.
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	
<b>Pacific Electric Santa Ana River Bridge</b>	Located at the point that the former Pacific Electric right-of-way crosses the Santa Ana River. Found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (see Section 3.5). Because the bridge is in the right-of-way, the right-of-way is visible from it. Existing visual quality: moderately high.

## 3.13.6 Existing Visual Quality at Visual Resources Designated by Policy Documents

Policy documents of the seven cities and the County of Orange within the SR-22/WOCC viewshed include areas classified as scenic resources, visual resources, aesthetic assets, open space and other similar designations. Table 3.13-3, Visual Resources Designated by Policy Documents summarizes these resources, and notes the existing visual quality for these facilities in the viewshed.

**Table 3.13-3  
VISUAL RESOURCES DESIGNATED BY POLICY DOCUMENTS**

<b>Designated Visual Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Orange County</b>	
<b>Los Alamitos Open Space</b>	Identified on "Open Space/Conservation Program Map" as large open space. Includes Old Ranch Golf Course, Naval Base Golf Course, and Los Alamitos Armed Forces Reserve Center, mostly outside viewshed due to landscaping, intervening land uses. Old Ranch Golf Course is currently being redeveloped. <b>Existing visual quality: moderately low.</b>
<b>Santa Ana River Corridor</b>	Identified on "Open Space/Conservation Program Map" as scenic corridor. Includes Santa Ana River Trail and River View Golf Course (see above). <b>Existing visual quality: moderately high.</b>
<b>Seal Beach</b>	
<b>Seal Beach Boulevard</b>	Designated as local scenic route in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Scenic Highways Element</i> . I-405 clearly visible, especially at Seal Beach Boulevard overcrossing. <b>Existing visual quality: moderately high.</b>
<b>Lampson Avenue</b>	Designated as local scenic route in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Scenic Highways Element</i> . I-405 partially screened by vegetation, noise barriers, and intervening land uses. Adjacent construction activities. <b>Existing visual quality: moderate.</b>
<b>Old Ranch Country Club and Tennis Club</b>	Designated as important recreation resource in <i>Seal Beach General Plan: Open Space/Recreation/ Conservation Element</i> . See Table 3.13-2. Old Ranch Golf Course currently being redeveloped. <b>Existing visual quality: moderately low to high.</b>
<b>Santa Ana</b>	
<b>Santa Ana River</b>	Identified as view corridor in <i>Circulation Element</i> . Identified in <i>Urban Design Element</i> as imageability reference points to influence urban design. <b>Existing visual quality: moderately high.</b>
<b>Main Place Mall</b>	Identified in <i>Urban Design Element</i> as city gateway and imageability reference points to influence urban design. <b>Existing visual quality: moderately high.</b>
<b>Willowick Municipal Golf Course</b>	Identified in <i>Urban Design Element</i> as imageability reference points to influence urban design. (See Table 3.13-2.) <b>Existing visual quality: high.</b>
<b>Tustin</b>	
<b>Hillside east of SR-55</b>	Designated as significant topographical features. <b>Existing visual quality: moderately high.</b>

### 3.13.7 Existing Freeway Landscaping

The landscaping along SR-22 contains some large trees and dense vegetation. In comparison to other freeways in the SR-22/WOCC, the SR-22 viewshed contains the most landscaping features. I-605 has tall trees on the west side, but does not contain a continuous screen, allowing views of the adjacent land uses. Recent freeway widening on the east side removed much of the landscaping, leaving an incomplete hedge to partially screen the adjacent noise barriers. I-405 in the viewshed received several improvements over the years, removing much of the landscaping. Relatively recent landscaping has been installed in some areas. SR-55 within the viewshed is currently undergoing a major improvement project and almost all of the landscaping has been removed. The total landscaped area within the rights-of-way is estimated to be over 150 hectares (370 acres).